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ABSTRACT

The currently popular topic of change may be considered from three vantage points in relation to communication and secondary education. First, changes in the discipline of speech communication are seen in the increasing number of high school teachers who teach communication as process by exploring the dimensions of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. Second, two occurrences in secondary education hold both promise and challenge: the redefinition of educational goals to involve communication skills and the emphasis by many English teachers on communication as the focal point of English language arts study. Third, instructional practices are changing in accountability/systematicity concerning learning goals, in the perception of the student's role in the learning process, and in individualized instruction and student sharing programs. (JM)

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THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE*

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by

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My topic is change. It is a popular topic. Alvin Toffler in Future Shock notes that

> Many of us have a vague "feeling" that things are moving faster. Doctors and executives alike complain that they cannot keep up with the latest developments in their fields . . . . Among many there is an uneasy mood -- a suspicion that change is out of control.[1]

Change permeates all aspects of contemporary life. It should be no surprise that our professional lives cannot escape such demands. Louis Bruno, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Washington, notes that "in no area of education is that demand [for change] more justifiable than in speech communication -- a discipline focusing on the process which is universally recognized as man's chief tool for change both within himself and within his society."[2]

In this paper, change will be considered from three vantage points: changes in the discipline of speech communication, changes in the world of secondary education, and changes in the nature of instructional practices.

What was our discipline like in the high school of yesterday? "Speech" courses on the

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*This article is based on a speech given by Professor Allen at the Eastern Communication Association Convention in New York, March 9, 1973.

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high school level were traditionally concerned with improving student skills in the public arts of expression. Although primary attention was usually given to perfecting public speaking skills, the student was also given the opportunity to participate in panel discussions and symposiums, read literature aloud, act in a play, and participate in radio and television productions. Such courses, in the words of Professor Parrish, "consisted merely in bits and pieces from the various areas of speech."[3]

Such high school survey courses of the oral speech arts, based largely on public performance, may be indicted for a number of reasons. First, such courses tend to focus on the skills of public performance when few students in real life will be called upon to exercise such skills. How many students, for example, will ever be called upon in later life to read poetry aloud, act in a play, announce a radio show, perform on television, or even deliver a formal public speech? Two years ago, I was visiting a classroom at a large inner city high school in Milwaukee. When the teacher started discussing the final assignment of the semester -- a ten-minute speech -- one of the students said, "If you add up all the public discourses I'm gonna give in my whole life, they ain't gonna be more than three minutes -- and I ain't gonna give no ten-minute speech in this class." Courses which survey the arts of public expression may seem far removed from the world in which many high school students live.

Second, such courses, in stressing the skills of the speaker, reader, actor, and/or radio and TV performer, tended to ignore, or relegate to a small corner of the course, systematic instruction for the listener/critic and the party to everyday speech communication interactions. Although every student may be expected to spend a relatively large proportion of his adult life as a recipient of public communications, and while every student experiences hundreds if not thousands

of informal speech communication encounters each day, few speech courses of yesterday made even a cursory attempt to prepare the student for such roles.

Third, the high school speech course of yesterday tended to sacrifice understanding of speech communication for performance of public speech acts. The student flitted randomly from one oral performance to the next with very little instruction interspersed. He spoke, or read, or acted, without being able to talk meaningfully about any of these higher orders of behavior. To the graduate of such courses, speech communication meant giving speeches, reading poetry and prose aloud, acting in plays, and producing radio and television programs. He or she did not understand the nature of the communication process and the myriad of forces which promote and constrain those moments when people interact.[4]

The traditional, conceptually void, public performance oriented high school speech course of yesterday led many to believe, in Arnold's words, that "speech is not a true subject at all, but an assortment of special activities which may be properly and adequately provided outside the regular academic schedule."[5] The traditional high school speech course, in Klopf's words, "faithfully upheld the traditions of the past . . . even though they bore little relationship to the reality of the present."[6] In an era of change, yesterday's high school speech courses represented "that which is to be changed.

But that was yesterday. Our discipline is changing. The first elaborated call for change was published under the title "Speech Communication in the High School Curriculum" in The Speech Teacher of November 1968.[7] In the following year, the report of the New Orleans Conference, Conceptual Frontiers in Speech Communication, gave impelling reexpression to that challenge.[8] In the few years since these changes were published, an increasing number of high school teachers have sought to respond by

teaching communication as process and by exploring the dimensions of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

What is it to learn about the process of communication? The student should come to know that communication is a dynamic, on-going, ever-changing, interactive phenomenon. He should understand that the parties to speech communication interactions are individuals with unique attitudes, values, cultural upbringings, intelligence, emotions, coding abilities, psychological habits, and potential for supplying and reading feedback. He should understand that all of these forces influence the choices a human being makes when encoding and decoding messages. He should come to know that audible, visible, and even tactile and olfactory cues may have communicative potential. He should understand that selective perception, simplification, communication context, and noise influence human interaction. In sum, he should know that communication is more than a message -- that it is a complex happening which must be perceived as a unique event.

Are high school teachers really presenting this view of the communication process? An increasing number are. Communication models help show all of these relationships. Speech in American Society,[9] published in 1968, was the first high school speech text to use a communication model to describe the communication process. Similar perspectives are provided in Galvin and Book's Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach for Teachers,[10] published in 1972, and Ray Nadeau's new book, Speech Communication: A Modern Approach,[11] published by Addison-Wesley this year.

What about intrapersonal communication? What should a high school student know about the ways that communications shape who he is and who he may become? He should certainly know that his self-concept has been shaped by the previous communications he has had with others. He should

understand that he may learn more about himself through judicious self-disclosures to others and through careful monitoring of the reactions of other people to his disclosures. He should recognize that his self-concept (or self-concepts really, since there are many dimensions of self) are influenced by a number of forces: his sense of physical well-being (and his psychological reaction to that sense); his ability to tolerate numerous and often conflicting instances of data about himself; the consistency of his behavior with the attitudes and values which his life's experiences have shaped; his ability to come to grips with social companions; and his ability to cope with stress precipitated by change. He should also know that such defense mechanisms as avoidance, rigidity, rationalization, and distortion may interfere with his ability to process the reactions others give him. And more, he should learn to be genuine, accepting, and empathetic in order that he will invite reactions to self-disclosures which may really inform him.

Sound scarey? Are high school teachers really teaching all of this? More and more are trying. One new book points the way. Sharon Ratliffe and Deldee Herman's book, Adventures in the Looking Glass,[12] published this year by National Textbook Company, is a lovely book, rich with communication experiences. It recognizes, as no book before it, that the junior high school student is in the midst of an identity crisis which the school should help him resolve. Two senior high school textbooks, released this summer, offer similar points of view.[13]

And what about interpersonal communication? The high school student should understand that he is strongly influenced by communication environments: that he communicates through the ways in which he uses space, and the ways that others use space communicates to him; that such environmental factors as noise, lighting, color, temperature, and furniture arrangement all influence his participation in moments of interpersonal interaction.

He should also learn about the dimensions of the nonverbal and verbal codes of communication: he should learn how people communicate through the use of distance, time, facial expression, eye contact, bodily action, and object language; he should also learn that his language strongly constrains the choices which he is free to make in moments of communicative juncture. He should know that when he meets people for the first time, his expectations and his initial impressions exert a powerful influence on what happens. He should understand how factors of time and space influence his ability to form and sustain friendships. He should know that assigning motives, stereotyping, and projecting may intrude in the establishment of an ongoing relationship. He should realize that his interpersonal dyadic relationships can be made more meaningful if psychological rewards are freely and honestly interchanged. And finally, he should acquire new insights into his experiences with small groups: his motives in joining and maintaining group memberships and the perils which confront groups as they generate goals, set the tone for group interaction, and make decisions.

Are high school teachers teaching all of these things? Some -- in some form. The Galvin and Book text, Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach for Teachers,[14] mentioned earlier, provides a rich fund of behaviorally oriented objectives of instruction in interpersonal communication and a broad range of activities which will enable students to acquire relevant behaviors. Many teachers have found this book a useful guide. And new textual materials are emerging.[15] The teacher who wishes to change will find it increasingly easy to do so as more and better textual materials become available.

Thus far attention has been given to new directions which have changed our discipline. But

what about the traditional content that we feel so comfortable teaching? There are mixed reactions. There are some who would say, "Throw it out! It reflects a world that no longer exists." This is not my position. It seems to me that instruction in a theory of communication and in intrapersonal and interpersonal communication should enrich rather than replace what we have been about. However, it is important that we redefine and reevaluate our content and pedagogical practices in each of the traditional areas. In 1970, participants in the Wingspread and Pheasant Run Conferences of the National Development Project on Rhetoric engaged in a careful and expanded redefinition of rhetoric. Given this expanded conception of rhetoric, the participants concluded that "the most important decisions in public and private life to be faced by every normal high school graduate are those we have characterized as rhetorical."[16] In redefining curricula, high school teachers should consider new ways of making instruction in our traditional subject matter areas responsive to the needs of high school aged students in contemporary society.

Given that the discipline of speech communication is changing, it is also important to note that the world of secondary education is anything but static these days. A revolution is underway, but it's a curious kind of revolution. The fire is often lit -- or if not lit, kindled -- by such bastions of the establishment as the U.S. Office of Education, state departments of public instuction, and even university schools of education.

The labels of the revolution are well known: free schools, schools without walls, street academies, competency based curricula, career education, etc., etc., etc. While all of these changes will unquestionably influence what we are about, I would like to focus on two occurrences in American secondary education which hold both great challenge and great promise.

First, it seems apparent that the goals of education are being redefined. Let's consider one example. The State of Wisconsin Superintendent's Task Force on Educational Goals posited the following twelve goals in a statement released in October 1972:[17] Human Relation Skills (Isn't this what interpersonal communication instruction is all about?), Basic Skills (including oral encoding and decoding skills), Citizenship and Political Understanding (That's how we've always justified instruction in rhetoric and group decision-making.), Values and Ethics Concepts (Aren't ethics and values most visible at moments of communicative juncture, and really -- what's theatre all about -- deep down, where it counts?), Creative, Constructive, and Critical Thinking Skills (Sound like creative dramatics, group decision-making, and argumentation?), Life-Long Learning Skills (Well, most people in post-school environments learn through the oral modality.), Cultural Appreciation Concepts (Theatre instruction certainly applies here.), Mental and Physical Health Concepts (Well, intrapersonal communication instruction aims to let the student know himself and I guess that's mentally healthy.), Economic Understanding Concepts (Do we relate to this? Not really.), Physical Environment Concepts (Do we relate to this? Probably not.), Career Education and Occupational Competencies (Do we relate to this? Absolutely!). So, what does it all mean? It seems to me that emerging statements of educational goals highlight our importance as a discipline. Most of the ways in which children are to be changed involve communication skills. It seems an appropriate time to discuss the goals of our instruction with others who are engaging in goal redefinition. The field of speech communication is imperfectly understood by local administrators, school boards, and curriculum coordinators and by those who make important decisions in state and federal education agencies. It is important, both individually and collectively, that we com-

municate with others outside our field.

Second, it seems apparent that important changes are occurring in the English curriculum. Admittedly, the English establishment is not known for its inclination to reform. Most English departments still hobble along on a very old and tired three-legged horse. It's legs? Language, composition, and literature (the latter leg being grossly inflated by elephantitis). But a renaissance is on the horizon.

Many English departments are discarding the last three required years -- American Literature, English Literature, and World Literature -- in favor of a rich supermarket of elective courses. Among the speech communication courses that are included are Film Production, Film History, Broadcast Media, Contemporary American Theatre, Theatre Production, Argument and Controversy, Contemporary Public Address, Interpersonal Communication, and Group Processes. In many schools, our courses are immensely popular electives in the English curriculum. We now have the opportunity to reach more students, in more courses, over a greater period of time. Given the increased demand for our courses, many schools are hiring more teachers certified in Speech Communication.

While these changes in the English curriculum are important, the future holds even greater promise. Some former high school English departments are now designated as Departments of English Communication, or, better yet, Communication. The change is not merely one of semantics. Many teachers and scholars within the English establishment are coming to see communication as the focal point for study in the English language arts. Secondary school teachers of speech communication should assume leadership in the formation of administrative structures reflecting more global, interdisciplinary communication programs. Our associations should take leadership in developing teacher certification standards and teacher preparation programs which reflect broader conceptions of the nature of communication.[18]

As our discipline changes and as the goals and structures of secondary education change, so too are we changing the nature of our instructional practices. Consideration will be given to three of these changes.

The first change may be labelled Accountability/Systematicity. The Educational Supplement of the Saturday Review noted, way back in March 1971, that:

> The most fashionable cliché in education's lexicon today is "accountability" -- and we are likely to hear much more on the subject in the months to come. In the past, it was the children, primarily, who were held accountable for individual success in the classroom. More recently . . . accountability . . . [has referred to] improving the effectiveness of the educational process [as] . . . we focus increasingly on pupil performance as a measure of teacher effectiveness.[19]

So what does it mean? It means that we should have a very clear notion of the behaviors we are trying to engender in our students. It also means that we must come to perfect our choices of instructional strategies designed to accomplish our learning goals and that we must perfect our means of assessing whether our instruction has been effective.[20]

A second important change in instructional practices involves our perception of the student's role in the learning process. More and more, instructional theorists and teachers alike are coming to realize that the best teaching-learning transactions are interactive, experiential, and life-related.

This point was made effectively by Bob Clausen, an Educational Psychologist, in an address to the Wisconsin Speech Communication Association in November 1972. He notes:

> Communication, among all curricular offerings, is primarily process and skill oriented. But it is possible to prevent that in the actual planning and execution of the communications curriculum. It is possible to teach cognitive data about speaking rather than speaking-listening skills. It is possible to focus on written and visual learning when 75-90% of all human communication is verbal and interactive. It is possible for the Communications teacher to be so in love with the beauty and eloquence of his own extemporaneous speech that there is little or no time for students to practice theirs. It is even possible to teach communication with the interaction going T - S, T - S_1, T - S_2, T - S_3, T - S_4, etc., without using the basic human data available in the classroom as the context in which communication processes are expanded and expatiated.[21]

The point is clear -- the chalkboard of the mind is easily erased. But the student who experiences communication will carry those experiences beyond the walls of the classroom. This is not to discredit the cognitive component of instruction. The experiences must be related to a structure which will enable the student to "get it all together." A number of new books provide a wealth of communication games and simulation exercises which the teacher will find useful if the student really comes to know (cognitively) what it is that he has experienced.[22]

The final change in Instructional Practice may be labelled Individualized Instruction/Shared Setting. This cluster relates to two axioms of education: "Not all kids are alike," and "You can't teach a kid something that he doesn't want to learn." In the past, all of our students have

marched through our speech courses in the lock-step of togetherness. But kids don't have the same skills, understandings, needs, and interests do they? So how do we make the learner a partner in the educational process? Let me provide one example from an English course. Having visited 170 high school speech communication classrooms in the past two years, I have yet to find an eminent instance of shared goal setting and individualized instruction. But consider how it works in a required sophomore English class. Each student is given a battery of tests as he enters tenth grade. His English teacher discusses these test results with each student during the week preceding the fall term. The student is informed of his strengths and weaknesses and invited to plan his program of study for the semester. Each student is given a weekly schedule, five 50-minute periods divided into five ten-minute modules. The student and the teacher, working cooperatively, decide how the student is to spend his time given his strengths and weaknesses. For example, one student may decide that he is sleepy on Monday mornings and will consequently spend his time on "leisure reading." On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, he may choose to spend two ten-minute mods in vocabulary development and three mods on speed reading since his test data reveal a weakness in these areas. On Friday, he may choose to spend all five of his ten-minute mods on creative writing since he shows real promise in this area. The weekly schedule which each student develops is seen as the basis for a learning contract. Each student sets goals in each area and is measured against his achievement of each of these goals as assessed by standardized tests. The teacher is a learning facilitator. He is easily recognized by the huge cart of learning materials which he pushes from classroom to classroom and by the bulging briefcase of student work which he seems always to have with him.

This article has sought to briefly review some of the elements of change confronting those of us who are interested in secondary education. Our discipline is changing. We are continuing to enrich our understandings of man as he reaches out to others through communication. And as our discipline matures, so too do the schools. The goals, structures, and curricula of secondary education are experiencing careful reexamination. And what is it to teach? We are becoming impatient with the models elected by our own high school teachers and college professors. It is a time for clarity in what we are about, a time for student experiencing, and a time for teacher and student sharing--in goal setting and in selecting the materials and methods of instruction. In summary, it's an exciting time to be a teacher of speech communication.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Alvin Toffler, Future Shock, Bantom Books, New York, 1971, p. 19.

[2]Louis Bruno, Strategies for Change in Speech Communication, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, Washington, 1972, p. 7.

[3]Wayland M. Parrish in "What is Speech? A Symposium," Quarterly Journal of Speech, April, 1955.

[4]This indictment of the traditional high school speech course is based on a discussion by R.R. Allen and S. Clay Willmington in Speech Communication in the Secondary School, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, 1972, pp. 14-15.

[5]Carroll C. Arnold, "The Case Against Speech: An Examination of Critical Viewpoints," Quarterly Journal of Speech, April, 1954, p. 166.

[6]Donald W. Klopf, "The High School Basic Speech Text," Speech Teacher, January, 1970, p. 78.

[7]William E. Buys, Charles V. Carlson, Mrs. Hite Compton, and Allan D. Frank, 'Speech Communication in the High School Curriculum," Speech Teacher, November, 1968, pp. 297-317.

[8]Robert J. Kibler and Larry L. Barker (editors), Conceptual Frontiers in Speech Communication, Speech Association of America, New York, 1969.

[9]R.R. Allen, Sharol Anderson, and Jere Hough, Speech in American Society, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1968.

[10]Kathleen M. Galvin and Cassandra L. Book, Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach for Teachers, National Textbook Company, Skokie, Illinois, 1972.

[11] Ray E. Nadeau, Speech Communication: A Modern Approach, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., Menlo Park, California, 1973.

[12] Sharon A. Ratliffe and Deldee M. Herman, Adventures in the Looking Glass, National Textbook Company, Skokie, Illinois, 1972.

[13] See Kathleen M. Galvin and Cassandra L. Book, Person to Person, National Textbook Company, Skokie, Illinois, 1973 and R.R. Allen, Sharol Parrish and C. David Mortensen, Communication: Interacting through Speech, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1974.

[14] Galvin and Book, op. cit., 1972.

[15] See Galvin and Book, op. cit., 1973 and Allen, Parrish, and Mortensen, op. cit., 1974.

[16] Lloyd F. Bitzer, Terminal Report of the Rhetoric Project, Speech Communication Association, New York, 1970, pp. 15-16.

[17] Goals for Education, Report of the State Superintendent's Advisory Task Force on Educational Goals, Department of Public Instruction, Madison, December, 1972.

[18] The Education Division of the 1973 Summer Conference, reporting in the Proceedings of the Summer Conference, Speech Communication Association, New York, 1973, offers recommendations in these directions.

[19] The Education Supplement, Saturday Review, March, 1971.

[20] A number of articles on the subject have been published in Speech Teacher during the last two years. Two interesting books on the subject are: W. James Popham and Eva L. Baker, Systematic

[20] (cont.) Instruction, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970 and Robert J. Kibler, Larry L. Barker, and David T. Miles, Behavioral Objectives and Instruction, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1970.

[21] Robert Clausen, unpublished keynote address, Wisconsin Communication Association, November, 1972.

[22] For example, see David W. Johnson, Reaching Out, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972 and Karen Krupar, Communication Games, Free Press, New York, 1973.

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